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(c) a controller electrically coupled between said electrodes of said cell and said terminals of said container to form, from the cell voltage, an output voltage across the positive and negative terminals of the container, said controller having a ground in common with said negative electrode of said cell and

A<sup>1</sup>  
(d) a circuit responsive to a predetermined condition of said battery, the circuit being operable to uncouple the output voltage of the controller from the terminals of the container upon detection of said predetermined condition, said container further having a ground to said negative terminal, wherein said ground to said negative terminal is in common with either said ground common to said controller and said negative electrode of said cell, or is a virtual ground isolating said negative electrode of said cell from said negative terminal of said container.

A<sup>2</sup>  
6(amended). The battery of Claim 1 wherein said cell has an internal impedance and said circuit is operable for monitoring the cell internal impedance, the circuit being responsive to a predetermined condition including the cell internal impedance exceeding a predetermined impedance, said predetermined impedance being known and greater than said cell internal impedance, the circuit uncoupling the output voltage of the controller from the container terminals upon detection of the predetermined condition to generally prevent an over-discharge of the cell.

A<sup>3</sup>  
8(amended). The battery of Claim 1 wherein said container has an internal pressure, said circuit is operable for monitoring the pressure within said container, the circuit being responsive to a predetermined condition including the container pressure exceeding a pressure limit, the circuit uncoupling the output voltage of the controller from the container terminals upon detection of the predetermined condition.

A<sup>4</sup>  
12(amended). A multiple-cell battery having a controller suitable for use in either a primary or secondary multiple-cell battery, said multiple-cell battery comprising:

a first container having a positive terminal and a negative terminal;

a first battery cell disposed within said first container, said first battery cell having a positive electrode, a negative electrode, and a battery cell voltage measured across said positive and said negative electrodes of the first battery cell;

a first controller electrically coupled between the electrodes of said first battery cell and the terminals of said first container to create a first container output voltage measured across said first container positive and negative terminals;

a second container electrically coupled to said first container, said second container having a positive terminal and a negative terminal;

a second battery cell disposed within said second container, said second battery cell having a positive electrode, a negative electrode, and a battery cell voltage measured across said positive and said negative electrodes of the second battery cell at least one of said first cell and said second cell having a ground to the negative electrode of that cell;

a second controller electrically coupled between said electrodes of said second battery cell and said terminals of said second container to create a second container output voltage measured across said second container positive and negative terminals, at least one of said first controller and said second controller having a ground in common with said negative electrode of said respective cell; and

a circuit responsive to a predetermined condition of said multiple cell battery, the circuit being electrically coupled to one of the first and second controllers to uncouple the respective one of the first and second container output voltages from the terminals of the respective one of the first and second containers upon detection of said predetermined condition, said container further having a ground to said negative terminal, wherein said ground to said negative terminal is in common with either said ground common to said controller and at least one negative electrode of one said cell, or is a virtual ground isolating said at least one negative electrode of said cell from said negative terminal of said container.

22(amended). The multiple cell battery of Claim 12 wherein said battery is attached to a load having a current demand and each of

A5  
said controllers has a capability to create a minimum output voltage, said predetermined condition includes the condition wherein the current demand of the load attached to the multiple cell battery exceeds the capabilities of at least one of the controllers to create a minimum output voltage, the circuit being further operable, upon uncoupling the output voltage of the controller from the terminals of the container, to couple at least one of the cells directly to said respective container terminals to form the cell voltage at the respective container terminals.

24(amended). A method for extending the useful life of a battery comprising the steps of:

providing a battery having a controller suitable for use in either a primary or secondary battery including:

(i) a container having a positive terminal and a negative terminal; and

(ii) a battery cell disposed within said container, said cell having a positive electrode, a negative electrode, and a cell voltage measured across said positive and said negative electrodes of said cell;

the method being characterized by:

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electrically coupling a controller between said electrodes of said cell and said terminals of said container to form, from the cell voltage, an output voltage across the positive and negative terminals of the container

providing a ground in common with said negative electrode of said cell and said controller

providing a ground to said negative terminal of said container placing said;

placing said ground to said negative terminal in common with either said ground common to said controller and said negative electrode of said cell, or making said ground to said negative electrode a virtual ground, thereby isolating said negative electrode of said cell from said negative terminal of said container and

in response to detection of a predetermined condition of the battery, uncoupling the output voltage of the controller from the terminals of the container.